

“Disrupting the Cycle: Reforming the Special Education Pipeline to Juvenile Justice through Inclusive Solutions.”

School-to-Prison Pipeline

- Throughout this presentation, I plan to shed light on the school-to-prison pipeline, a troubling trend that disproportionately impacts minority students, particularly in the African-American community. This phenomenon redirects students away from classrooms and towards involvement in the juvenile justice system, ultimately leading to entanglement within the adult prison system. Through my research, four key themes have emerged: zero-tolerance policies, exclusionary practices, restorative justice, and equity.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

- Since the 1980s, a substantial body of academic literature has focused on the policies and practices contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline, particularly their impact on African-American children. While zero-tolerance and exclusionary practices have exacerbated this issue, recent efforts have explained alternatives such as restorative practices and promoting equity and inclusion.

Zero-Tolerance

- Zero-tolerance policies, introduced in response to safety concerns, operate on the assumption that harsh sanctions deter misconduct and improve school safety. However, evidence suggests that these policies disproportionately affect minority students and fail to enhance safety.

Zero-Tolerance

- In 2012 the Civil Rights Unit of the Department of Education reported that:
- Blacks were three times more likely than whites to be suspended.
- White girls received only one-third of suspensions, Black girls had a suspension rate of 12 percent, compared to a 2 percent for white girls.
- American Indian and Native Alaskan students were also disproportionately suspended and expelled, representing less than 1 percent of the student population, but 2 percent of out-of-school suspensions and 3 percent of expulsions.

Zero-Tolerance

Similar disparities prevailed in referrals to law enforcement. At the national level, Blacks constitute just 16 percent of student enrollments but 27 percent of those referred to law enforcement and 31 percent of those subjected to a school-related arrest (Kilgore, 2015).

Exclusionary Practices

- In the same way, exclusionary practices help support the data provided by the Civil Rights Unit of the Department of Education.

Exclusionary Practices

- Exclusionary practices, including suspensions and expulsions, hinder minority students' educational engagement. Biases in perception lead to disproportionate disciplinary actions against black children, perpetuating systemic disadvantages in education.

Exclusionary Practices

- “Sociologist Michael Kimmel (2008) suggested that, for middle-class males, the period of time when boys are not held fully responsible for their actions can extend well into their late 20s. In contrast, the present research suggests that Black children may be viewed as adult as soon as 13, with average age overestimation of Black children exceeding four and half years in some cases...”

Exclusionary Practices

- In other words, our findings suggest that, although most children are allowed to be innocent until adulthood, Black children may be perceived as innocent only until deemed suspicious. The perception for black children does them a great disservice; being labeled and misjudged does not afford minority students the same opportunities as their white peers.

Restorative Practices

- Restorative Justice offers an alternative to exclusionary discipline, focusing on conflict resolution and rehabilitation. Implementing restorative practices can mitigate suspension rates among black students and address disparities in educational outcomes.

Restorative Practices

- Restorative Justice (RJ) is a philosophy that is designed to promote conflict resolution by allowing people to correct the harm they have caused. The implication of restorative practices inside of schools instead of exclusionary discipline that can make a big difference in keeping Black students from being suspended at alarming rates (Morgan, 2021).

Restorative Practices

- The disparities in educational outcomes and inequitable treatment within the schools have historically been the reason Black families have distrust for the educational system. After all, restorative practices have led to other rehabilitative frameworks.

Restorative Practices

- One of these frameworks is Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS). School wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is used in over 16,000 schools nationwide (U.S. Department of Education) as cited in (Mallet, 2016).
- School wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports train teachers, school staff, and administrators to respond purposefully to promote and reinforce positive behaviors.
- Restorative practices when implemented can draw out a student's strength, it helps individuals understand their significance, and ultimately it helps individuals to grow personally in their ability to make better decisions and correct problems. With the implication of these types of restorative practices Black students should be afforded the same opportunities as their white counterparts.

EQUITY

- Addressing racial disparities in education requires a commitment to equity and inclusion culturally responsive teaching, equitable disciplinary policies, and ongoing staff training are essential steps toward creating fair and supportive learning environments.

EQUITY

“White privilege is defined as: a combination of exclusive standards and opinions that are supported by Whites in a way that continually reinforces social distance between groups on the basis of power, access, advantage, majority status, control, choice, autonomy, authority, possessions, wealth, opportunity, material acquisition, connection, preferential treatment, entitlement, and social standing (Hays & Chang, 2003; Manning & Baruth, 2009) as cited in (Thomas, 2009).

EQUITY

- This is a conversation that educators have to stop avoiding. The curriculum that is being taught is being taught is not identifiable by every student. A big disservice is being committed when inclusion is not implemented. The incorporation of cultural inclinations may help with reducing disruptive behaviors and in return eliminating the need for disciplinary actions (Jacobs, L. et al, 2022 p.9)

EQUITY

- School districts should have an investment in training all staff members on equity, diversity, and inclusion. School's that continuously build staff capacity and that have constant evaluations of the school's discipline and policies, are moving in the right direction to ensure fairness and equity.
- Also providing the necessary training for all school staff to learn the importance of providing fair and equal opportunity to students of color, at-risk students, and students with disabilities. Collecting data, gathering feedback from families, students, and teachers can help reduce discriminatory practices (Heitzeg)>

Conclusion

- Lastly I hope that this power point has provided some information on how the school-to-prison pipeline has affected the African-American community and has hopefully provided the audience with the knowledge, history, and understanding, the detriment being inflicted upon our Black students by policies and practices have been providing the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) with new client's curiosity of the public school systems. However, there has been a great push to counterintuitively fight the school-to-prison pipeline. Implementing frameworks such as restorative practices, inclusion within the curriculum and providing equity will help those students that are being targeted by an agenda that seems to exist but no one directly acknowledges. Education over Incarceration.

Resources

- James William Kilgore. (2015). *Understanding mass incarceration : a people's guide to the key civil rights struggle of our time*. New Press, The.
- Morgan, H. (2021). Restorative Justice and the School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Review of Existing Literature. *Education Sciences*, 11(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11040159>
- Mallett, C. A. (2016). The School-to-Prison Pipeline: From School Punishment to Rehabilitative Inclusion. *Preventing School Failure: Altern*Heitzeg, N. A. (2016). *The School-to-Prison Pipeline: Education, Discipline, and Racialized Double Standards*. ABC-CLIO.
- Heitzeg, N. A. (2016). *The School-to-Prison Pipeline: Education, Discipline, and Racialized Double Standards*. ABC-CLIO.
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